

History Routes  
Solo Exhibition  
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Atelier Concorde, Lisboa  
October 2018

I've been thinking of catchphrases in political speech we're asked to live with (Alternative facts), and of words as frames in general. These terms and words chart the differences in the worlds inhabited by our ancestors and ourselves - The Atlantic as The Middle Passage or The Pond; the symbol of a River - as the Styx, as the river Siddhartha Gautama crossed fleeing the palace towards his spiritual quest, water itself as life giving, travelling along a river that decides the course of ones journey, the anthropomorphized river searching and finding its way to the ocean, something to be crossed over that stays behind then as a sign of a threshold.

I arrived in Lisboa at the end of January this year, and began reading Pessoa and imagined him in conversation with Kabir, a 15th century poet-saint from Benares.

"The poet is a man who feigns  
And feigns so thoroughly, at last  
He manages to feign as pain  
the pain he really feels.."

"O slave, liberate yourself  
Where are you, and where is your home,  
find it in your lifetime,  
If you fail to wake up now,  
you'll be helpless when the time comes.  
Says Kabir, listen, O wise one,  
The siege of Death is hard to withstand."

"To be whole it is enough to exist."

Trying to dig into history led me to the book 'Black Athena' by Martin Bernal. Back in India, school history text books are being changed by the government to place a lens that further obliterates nuance and truth itself. Whole generations will grow up on these books...Grief, but things have a way of flipping around. I've been thinking of tongue-in-cheek calling-forths in the paintings, depicting spilled blood bursting into flames, each spilled drop coming alive again, phoenix-like, biblical, keeping it's life-giving power.

A poem of a much loved and honored Marathi poet, Namdeo Dhasal.

### **To a Friend**

Roots come out from the inside, broken apart in such a way  
That our kinship in a common soil  
Becomes my friend  
a distorted relationship.

How did the standing crop  
wither in the blink of an eye?  
Time squats here chewing its cud  
That moist heart filled to the brim with moist black soil  
Where has it disappeared?  
Blight has enveloped the tree of desire.  
It's a season of plenty, yet its days have only turned  
women into widows with shaven heads  
And you, my friend, embrace a corpse and cling to it in such a season.  
Life is darkness and existence only an accident.

The falcon zooms high in the sky  
You feel helpless.  
Stop crawling in the sand if you are terrified.

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